

The microbiological quality of food in developing countries, comparison with the European system

Dr Didier Montet

UMR Qualisud, CIRAD Montpellier, France

Food safety varies from one country to another. The richest countries are implementing regulatory systems such as in Europe with the Regulation 178/2002 forcing food manufacturers to provide safe food to the public. Most developing countries cannot afford this type of expensive system despite an increased awareness of governments on food safety. Trade within developing countries is generally undemanding in food safety. These countries usually have no national regulations or it is poorly enforced because of lack of resources or political will. In some of the poorest countries, access to drinking water is extremely limited. There are three types of countries, those whose food safety status is not mastered, those where food safety status is mastered by the population (overheating food) and those whose food safety status is mastered by regulation. To all this are added the countries suffering war or climate.

In safety terms, the main problem is the abundance of pathogenic microorganisms for the digestive system. Sanitary markers (*E. coli*) are often present in high quantities. More serious illnesses like cholera occasionally affect the poorest countries (*Vibrio cholerae*). Other hazards could affect people without food safety surveillance such as mycotoxins, carcinogenic molecules, difficult and expensive to analyze or antibiotic resistance... In addition, countries without regulation or performed analytical system are seen to confront of denial export, sometimes simply due to a break in the cold chain or a lack of traceability. In most developing countries, the expertise exists but is rarely used.